



Conferencing with Writers

Background:

Developing a structure for writing conferences can make them less intimidating. The structure and guidelines provided here are a loose translation of what typically happens during Studio conferences.

How We Used the Work Included in this Center:

These tips have been synthesized from the work of many different experts in the field, including Lucy Calkins, Nancie Atwell, Donald Graves, Anne Lamott, Natalie Goldberg, and Georgia Heard. They guide Angela's conferences with students, and she shares them with Studio teachers and interns so that they may shape them based upon their experiences.

Think and Ink:

How do you help students reflect on their work?

What are the best ways to support students as they conference with one another?

Please reflect and share on the Think and Ink sheet provided.

Conferencing with Writers

Structure:

- Ideally, writing conferences take place each time we meet with writers face to face, and for those who use social networking tools, this can happen more frequently.
- Conferences do not have to last more than 2-4 minutes typically.

Guidelines:

- Conferences are targeted conversations. Writers typically define a question or a need relevant to writer's craft or process, and the conference allows for collaborative exploration of the problem and strategizing potential solutions.
- Conventions are not focal points for writing conferences. They are attended to at the very end of the writing process, during editing sessions.
- Effective conferences allow writers to explore possibilities with others. Writers do not emerge with directives, they emerge with options to consider.
- The best conferences are driven by quality questions.
- Skilled teachers of writing are able to assess where the writer is, where the writer would like to be, and which capacities need to be built in order to support the writer's journey. They prompt writers in ways that will help them progress just a tiny bit more, rather than providing strategies or assigning solutions that writers aren't ready to apply independently.